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RUEHBH/AMEMBASSY NASSAU PRIORITY 0096
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY 0078
RUEHTI/AMEMBASSY TIRANA PRIORITY 0074
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY 0060
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SUBJECT: MAY 9 MFA PRESS BRIEFING: GUANTANAMO UIGHURS,
IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE, VATICAN, U.S.-JAPAN ALLIANCE,
CHINA-JAPAN MEETINGS, TANG TO NORTH KOREA, SUDAN, SCO,
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL, SOUTH CHINA SEA, EAST TIMOR, CHING
CHEONG CASE, FM LI'S TRAVELS

Summary

11. Key points made at the May 9 MFA press briefing
are as follows:

- China strongly opposes Albania's acceptance of the five Uighurs previously held at Guantanamo Bay, who Beijing considers East Turkestan terrorist suspects, and demands their immediate repatriation.
- China does not support sanctions nor the "wanton use or threat of force" to handle the Iranian nuclear issue.
- The Vatican did not respond to China's proposal on the recent selection of bishops, but subsequently made "wanton accusations."
- Beijing hopes Washington will appreciate China's efforts to resolve bilateral economic and trade disputes.
- The U.S.-Japan alliance should not target any third country.
- The recent China-Japan strategic dialogue explored the possibility of holding a foreign ministers' meeting during an upcoming international event.
- State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan recently visited North Korea, the MFA spokesperson confirmed without offering any details.
- Beijing has sent peacekeepers to Sudan to help achieve a comprehensive peace settlement.
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) foreign

ministers will meet May 15 in Shanghai. Tajik FM Nazarov will pay an official visit to China May 11-18 and Russian FM Lavrov will visit May 15-16.

- China's participation in the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) will help promote the global human rights cause.
- Beijing hopes to resolve disputes over the South China Sea by pursuing joint development.
- The Chinese Government is deeply concerned about the security of Chinese people in East Timor.
- The MFA spokesperson declined to offer any specific information on the case of detained journalist Ching Cheong, reiterating that the case will be handled according to the law.
- FM Li Zhaoxing will visit Mexico, the Bahamas, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, as well as make a technical stop in Mauritania, May 17-25. He will attend the May 23-24 Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) meeting in Qatar. End Summary.

China Demands Repatriation of Uighur Detainees

12. Asked during the regular May 9 MFA press briefing about Albania's acceptance of five Uighurs previously held in Guantanamo Bay, MFA Spokesperson Liu Jianchao expressed China's strong opposition to the arrangement made between the U.S. and Albanian Governments. The five individuals accepted by Albania are by no means refugees, but rather suspected members of East Turkestan terrorist forces, which maintain close links to Al Qaeda and the Taliban and have been sanctioned

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by the UNSC, Liu asserted. The arrangement between Albania and the United States violates the UN Charter and international law. Beijing has issued strong representations to both countries and demands the immediate repatriation of the five terrorist suspects. Asked whether this issue will damage U.S.-China counterterrorism cooperation, Liu remarked that enhancing counterterrorism cooperation serves the interests of China and other countries. Beijing hopes other nations will make more efforts to strengthen cooperation in this area and not "vice versa," he concluded.

Beijing Opposes Sanctions or Force against Iran

13. Questioned by the Reuters correspondent about China's stance on incorporating in the UNSC draft resolution on Iran a clause invoking Chapter VII, Liu remarked that the Iranian nuclear issue has reached a crucial juncture. China hopes the relevant parties will demonstrate flexibility, restraint and calm, refrain from taking actions that could further aggravate the situation and create conditions for a resumption of talks. Emphasizing that the best solution is one reached through dialogue, Liu asserted that China never supports the "wanton use or threat of force." Beijing is "opposed to the use of sanctions or threat of force" in handling international affairs, he said in response to a follow-up question. China hopes that the parties will solve the matter in a peaceful and constructive manner.

Increase in Vatican-Beijing Tensions

14. Asked by a number of correspondents about the recent rise in tensions between China and the Vatican due to Beijing's recent appointments of Catholic bishops, Liu remarked that the Vatican is clear about China's position on the issue of appointments of Catholic clergy in China. He stated that the PRC Constitution protects the Chinese people's freedom to believe or not believe in religion in accordance with the law, adding that the Chinese Government respects religious customs. Over the past half-century China has "self-appointed" over 170 bishops who have contributed to the country's religious affairs. The Chinese Government does not interfere in religious affairs, he argued.

15. Although Beijing and the Holy See have encountered some disagreements over the appointment of bishops, China has adopted a pragmatic approach in order to improve relations with the Vatican, Liu maintained. China has proposed shelving differences and seeking common ground, offering to discuss the selection of bishops with the Vatican. The Holy See did not respond to Beijing's proposal, but subsequently made "wanton accusations." These statements did not match its expressions of intent to improve relations with China. Beijing hopes the Vatican will stop interfering in China's internal affairs, respect the will of China's churches and not create new obstacles to the development of bilateral ties, Liu remarked. China is sincere about bettering relations with the Vatican and is prepared to work with the Vatican to explore ways to enhance relations. Beijing wishes the Holy See will adopt a correct approach to handling Taiwan in order create conditions for the normalization of ties.

U.S. Treasury Report

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16. Asked by the Bloomberg correspondent how Beijing would react to a possible U.S. designation of China as a currency manipulator in the upcoming Department of Treasury report, Liu stated that the Chinese Government has expounded on China's currency policy, which was reiterated by President Hu Jintao during his recent visit to the United States. Beijing hopes Washington will appreciate China's efforts to resolve bilateral economic and trade disputes.

U.S.-Japan Alliance

17. Asked to comment on the announced realignment of the U.S.-Japan alliance, Liu asserted that the U.S.-Japan alliance is a bilateral arrangement and should not exceed the bilateral framework. The alliance should not target any third country and should respect the security concerns of the region.

Sino-Japanese Dialogue, Possible FM Meeting

18. Several correspondents asked about the recent Sino-Japanese strategic dialogue and the possibility that the two foreign ministers will meet during the May 23-24 Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) meeting in

Qatar. Liu noted that Executive Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo and Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi held the fifth round of the China-Japan strategic dialogue May 7-9. The two officials explored the possibility of holding a foreign ministers' meeting during an upcoming international event, an option that requires further study, Liu said. EVFM Dai expounded on President Hu's remarks to the Japanese delegation of China-Japan friendship associations, requesting that the countries work together to remove obstacles to bilateral ties. They also agreed to hold another meeting on the East China Sea Dispute, Liu noted, although he did not offer a specific date. The two countries have major differences over the East China Sea issue. China hopes the consultations will narrow differences and lead to a resolution.

Tang to North Korea

¶9. Asked by the Phoenix correspondent about State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan's reported visit to North Korea, Liu confirmed that the visit occurred recently but declined to offer any details.

PRC Peacekeepers to Sudan

¶10. Responding to the AFP correspondent's question whether China plans to dispatch peacekeepers to Sudan, Liu expressed appreciation for the sincerity of the relevant parties in Sudan. China is ready to work with the various parties to promote the Darfur peace agreement. Liu said that Beijing has offered assistance to Sudan and the African Union and has sent peacekeepers to Sudan to help achieve a comprehensive peace settlement.

SCO Foreign Ministers' Meeting

¶11. Liu announced that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) foreign ministers will meet May 15 in Shanghai and will concentrate on preparations for the June SCO Summit. Asked by the UPI correspondent

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whether the Iranian nuclear issue will be raised during upcoming SCO meetings, Liu stated that the SCO aims to promote regional dialogue, peace, stability and security. SCO members will decide themselves whether to discuss the Iranian nuclear issue during the June Summit. Liu reported that Tajik FM Nazarov will pay an official visit to China May 11-18 and Russian FM Lavrov will visit May 15-16. Discussions between FM Lavrov and FM Li Zhaoxing will focus on strengthening the China-Russia strategic partnership and on maintaining regional peace and stability. FM Lavrov will also meet with other Chinese leaders.

UN Human Rights Council

¶12. Asked whether China will apply for a seat on the newly formed UN Human Rights Council (HRC), Liu stated that Beijing supports the role of the HRC and believes China's participation will help promote the global human rights cause.

Nansha Islands

¶13. Responding to the People's Daily correspondent's question about a Vietnamese mobile phone company's reported establishment of a mobile station on the Nansha (Spratley) Islands, Liu remarked that China maintains indisputable sovereignty over the Nansha Islands and adjacent waters. Beijing hopes to resolve disputes over the South China Sea by pursuing joint development. Any unilateral action taken on this territory is illegal, Liu argued.

East Timor Unrest

¶14. Asked about the recent riots in Dili, Liu noted that some Chinese were injured and Chinese-owned shops were destroyed during the riots. The Chinese Government is deeply concerned about the security of Chinese people in East Timor and the MFA has issued a travel warning to the country. Chinese Embassy officers have visited the victims and urged local police to step up protection of Chinese residents.

Detained Journalist Ching Cheong

¶15. Asked for an update on the case of detained Singapore Straits Times journalist Ching Cheong, Liu declined to offer any specific information, reiterating that the case will be handled according to the law.

FM Li's Upcoming Travels

¶16. FM Li will visit Mexico, the Bahamas, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, as well as make a technical stop in Mauritania, May 17-25, Liu reported. FM Li will attend the second China-Mexico standing committee meeting and hold talks with President Fox and his Mexican counterpart. He will also participate in the fifth ACD meeting in Qatar.
RANDT